

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application:

1 Claim 1 (original): An image search program for enabling
2 a computer to perform:
3 a symbol providing step of determining whether
4 predetermined images are similar to or dissimilar from
5 first images and storing symbols for each of the
6 predetermined images in data regions which are
7 categories, in association with one first image, each
8 symbol representing similarity or dissimilarity;
9 a reference-image retrieving step of retrieving some
10 of the first images stored in a storage section, which
11 are similar to a reference image, thereby retrieving
12 primary selected images;
13 an accumulating step of accumulating the values of
14 the symbols stored in each category, for secondary
15 selected images included in the primary selected images
16 and being more similar to the reference image than the
17 remaining primary selected images;
18 a category selecting step of selecting some of the
19 categories, each having accumulated a symbol value
20 greater than the other categories, thereby selecting a
21 first number of categories; and
22 a symbol-provided image retrieving step of
23 retrieving some of the first images having symbols
24 representing similarity and stored in a second number of

25 categories included in the first number of categories.

1 Claim 2 (original): The image search program according
2 to claim 1,

3 wherein the accumulating step accumulates the values
4 of the symbols stored in each category, for the secondary
5 selected images extracted in the order the descending
6 order of similarity to the reference image, in accordance
7 with attributes values of the corresponding primary
8 selected images.

1 Claim 3 (original): The image search program according
2 to claim 1,

3 wherein the accumulating step accumulates the values
4 of the symbols stored in each category, for the secondary
5 selected images extracted in the order the descending
6 order of similarity to the reference image, said
7 secondary selected images being images that a person who
8 wants to retrieve images has selected in accordance with
9 index images obtained by reducing the primary selected
10 images.

1 Claim 4 (original): The image search program according
2 to claim 1,

3 wherein the reference-image retrieving step has
4 a step of determining whether each of the first images is
5 similar to or dissimilar from the reference image, in

6 accordance with the attribute values of the first image
7 and the attribute value of the reference image.

1 Claim 5 (original): The image search program according
2 to claim 1,

3 wherein the reference image is an image selected
4 from the first images or an image input by a person who
5 wants to retrieve images.

1 Claim 6 (currently amended): ~~An~~ The image search program
2 ~~for enabling a computer to perform according to claim 1,~~
3 wherein the symbol providing step includes:

4 a second reference-image retrieving step of
5 retrieving at least one second image selected from first
6 images stored in a storage section, which is similar to
7 ~~a reference the predetermined~~ image;

8 an image-displaying step of displaying an index
9 image obtained by reducing the second image retrieved;

10 an image-selecting step of causing a person who
11 wants to retrieve images to select at least one third
12 image similar to the ~~reference the predetermined~~ image,
13 ~~in accordance with~~ from the index image displayed; and

14 a symbol-providing -storing step of storing symbols
15 in data regions which are categories provided for the
16 ~~reference predetermined~~ image, in association with the
17 third image selected, each symbol representing similarity
18 or dissimilarity.

1 Claim 7 (currently amended): The image search program
2 according to claim 6,
3 wherein the second reference-image retrieving step
4 has a step of determining whether each of the first
5 images is similar to or dissimilar from the ~~reference~~
6 predetermined image, in accordance with the attribute
7 values of the first image and the attribute value of the
8 reference image.

1 Claim 8 (currently amended): The image search program
2 according to claim 6,
3 wherein the ~~reference~~ predetermined image is an
4 image selected from the first images or an image input by
5 a person who wants to retrieve images.

1 Claim 9 (original): A storage medium which stores a
2 computer readable program allowing a computer to execute:
3 a symbol providing step of determining whether
4 predetermined images are similar to or dissimilar from
5 first images and storing symbols for each of the
6 predetermined images in data regions which are
7 categories, in association with one first image, each
8 symbol representing similarity or dissimilarity;
9 a reference-image retrieving step of retrieving some
10 of the first images stored in a storage section, which
11 are similar to a reference image, thereby retrieving

12 primary selected images;
13 an accumulating step of accumulating the values of
14 the symbols stored in each category, for secondary
15 selected images included in the primary selected images
16 and being more similar to the reference image than
17 the remaining primary selected images;
18 a category selecting step of selecting some of
19 the categories, each having accumulated a symbol value
20 greater than the other categories, thereby selecting
21 a first number of categories; and
22 a symbol-provided image retrieving step of
23 retrieving some of the first images having symbols
24 representing similarity and stored in a second number of
25 categories included in the first number of categories.

1 Claim 10 (currently amended): A The storage medium which
2 stores a computer readable program ~~allowing a computer to~~
3 ~~execute~~ according to claim 9, wherein the symbol
4 providing step includes:
5 a second reference-image retrieving step of
6 retrieving at least one second image selected from first
7 images stored in a the storage section, which is similar
8 to a ~~reference~~ the predetermined image;
9 an image-displaying step of displaying an index
10 image obtained by reducing the second image retrieved;
11 an image-selecting step of causing a person who
12 wants to retrieve images to select at least one third

13 image similar to the ~~reference~~ predetermined image, ~~in~~
14 ~~accordance with~~ from the index image displayed; and
15 a symbol ~~providing~~ -storing step of storing symbols
16 in data regions which are categories provided for the
17 ~~reference~~ predetermined image, in association with the
18 third image selected, each symbol representing similarity
19 or dissimilarity.

1 Claim 11 (original): An image search apparatus
2 comprising:
3 a symbol providing section which determines whether
4 predetermined images are similar to or dissimilar from
5 first images and stores symbols for each of the
6 predetermined images in data regions which are
7 categories, in association with one first image, each
8 symbol representing similarity or dissimilarity;
9 a reference-image retrieving section which retrieves
10 some of the first images stored in a storage section,
11 which are similar to a reference image, thereby retrieves
12 primary selected images;
13 an accumulating section which accumulates the values
14 of the symbols stored in each category, for secondary
15 selected images included in the primary selected images
16 and being more similar to the reference image than the
17 remaining primary selected images;
18 a category selecting section which selects some of
19 the categories, each having accumulated a symbol value

20 greater than the other categories, thereby selects a
21 first number of categories; and
22 a symbol-provided image retrieving section which
23 retrieves some of the first images having symbols
24 representing similarity and stored in a second number of
25 categories included in the first number of categories.

1 Claim 12 (currently amended): ~~An~~ The image search
2 apparatus ~~comprising~~ according to claim 11, wherein the
3 symbol providing section includes:
4 a second reference-image retrieving section which
5 retrieves at least one second image selected from first
6 images stored in a storage section, which is similar to a
7 ~~reference~~ the predetermined image;
8 an image-displaying section which displays an index
9 image obtained by reducing the second image retrieved;
10 an image-selecting section which causes a person who
11 wants to retrieve images to select at least one third
12 image similar to the ~~reference~~ predetermined image, ~~in~~
13 ~~accordance with~~ from the index image displayed; and
14 a symbol-~~providing~~ -storing section which stores
15 symbols in data regions which are categories provided for
16 the ~~reference~~ predetermined image, in association with
17 the third image selected, each symbol representing
18 similarity or dissimilarity.

1 Claim 13 (original): An image search method comprising:

2 a symbol providing step of determining whether
3 predetermined images are similar to or dissimilar from
4 first images and storing symbols for each of the
5 predetermined images in data regions which are
6 categories, in association with one first image, each
7 symbol representing similarity or dissimilarity;

8 a reference-image retrieving step of retrieving some
9 of the first images stored in a storage section, which
10 are similar to a reference image, thereby retrieving
11 primary selected images;

12 an accumulating step of accumulating the values of
13 the symbols stored in each category, for secondary
14 selected images included in the primary selected images
15 and being more similar to the reference image than the
16 remaining primary selected images;

17 a category selecting step of selecting some of the
18 categories, each having accumulated a symbol value
19 greater than the other categories, thereby selecting
20 a first number of categories; and

21 a symbol-provided image retrieving step of
22 retrieving some of the first images having symbols
23 representing similarity and stored in a second number of
24 categories included in the first number of categories.

1 Claim 14 (currently amended): ~~An~~ The image search method
2 ~~comprising~~ according to claim 13, wherein the symbol
3 providing step includes:

4 a second reference-image retrieving step of
5 retrieving at least one second image selected from first
6 images stored in a storage section, which is similar to
7 ~~a reference~~ the predetermined image;
8 an image-displaying step of displaying an index
9 image obtained by reducing the second image retrieved;
10 an image-selecting step of causing a person who
11 wants to retrieve images to select at least one third
12 image similar to the ~~reference~~ predetermined image, ~~in~~
13 ~~accordance with~~ from the index image displayed; and
14 a symbol-~~providing~~ -storing step of storing symbols
15 in data regions which are categories provided for the
16 ~~reference~~ predetermined image, in association with the
17 third image selected, each symbol representing similarity
18 or dissimilarity.

1 Claim 15 (new): The storage medium which stores a
2 computer readable program according to claim 9,
3 wherein the accumulating step accumulates the values
4 of the symbols stored in each category, for the secondary
5 selected images extracted in the order the descending
6 order of similarity to the reference image, in accordance
7 with attributes values of the corresponding primary
8 selected images.

1 Claim 16 (new): The storage medium which stores a
2 computer readable program according to claim 9,

3 wherein the accumulating step accumulates the values
4 of the symbols stored in each category, for the secondary
5 selected images extracted in the order the descending
6 order of similarity to the reference image, said
7 secondary selected images being images that a person who
8 wants to retrieve images has selected in accordance with
9 index images obtained by reducing the primary selected
10 images.

1 Claim 17 (new): The storage medium which stores a
2 computer readable program according to claim 9,
3 wherein the reference-image retrieving step has
4 a step of determining whether each of the first images is
5 similar to or dissimilar from the reference image, in
6 accordance with the attribute values of the first image
7 and the attribute value of the reference image.

1 Claim 18 (new): The storage medium which stores a
2 computer readable program according to claim 9,
3 wherein the reference image is an image selected
4 from the first images or an image input by a person who
5 wants to retrieve images.

1 Claim 19 (new): The storage medium which stores a
2 computer readable program according to claim 10,
3 wherein the second reference-image retrieving step
4 has a step of determining whether each of the first

5 images is similar to or dissimilar from the predetermined
6 image, in accordance with the attribute values of the
7 first image and the attribute value of the reference
8 image.

1 Claim 20 (new): The storage medium which stores a
2 computer readable program according to claim 10,
3 wherein the predetermined image is an image selected
4 from the first images or an image input by a person who
5 wants to retrieve images.